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ABSTRACT

Teaching is not considered a desirable occupation in China, and many teachers are unhappy in their jobs. Education is the weak sector within the bureaucracy. Because it has been neglected for a long time, especially during the Cultural Revolution, many people, including government officials, do not take the problems of education seriously. From 1981 to 1985, China spent 2.56 percent of its national income on education, as against 7.3 percent by the United States. The poor living and working conditions have led many teachers to leave rural areas and small towns making the shortage of teachers even worse. Teachers generally have not been well-paid in China; their average wage has been the lowest among government employees. Less than one year after earning their diplomas, many teachers want to transfer to higher paying jobs. Even though job contracts are guaranteed, fewer and fewer students want to become teachers. The quality of teachers has a direct bearing on the development of the new generation being educated in schools, and a prospective bearing on the future of the nation. Therefore, building a contingent of qualified teachers is a measure of fundamental importance to the improvement of educational quality and the development of the cause of education. Suggestions to improve teachers' lives in China are offered. (JD)

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The Status and Needs of Teachers in China

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The status and Needs of Teachers in China

China is a country with a long history in the world. The Chinese people of various nationalities have, through joint efforts, created a brilliant culture. However, as a result of being degraded to a semicolonial, semifeudal society more than a hundred years ago, China lagged behind other nations in culture and education.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, educational undertakings in China have made great progress. And there is no denying the fact that many teachers have worked diligently and made valuable contributions to the cause of educating new China's younger generation. They are "diligent gardeners" and "engineers of the human soul". They shoulder the glorious and arduous task of extending human civilization and advanced thoughts and training to the younger generation. The quality of teachers has a direct bearing on the development of the new generation being educated in schools and a prospective bearing on the future of the nation. Hence they should be entitled to the respect of society, a higher social status, and better pay.

There are more than 8,000,000 teachers in China. What is their real situation? How do they view their own profession? Do they really cherish and feel contented with what they are doing? What personal needs, problems, and troubles do they have? How many teachers are qualified to undertake the lofty task of training children: morally, intellectually, and physically. These are very important questions that we need to study and discuss and to which we should pay due attention. The satisfactory solution of these questions will be of extreme importance in bringing the teachers initiative into full play.

This paper tries to use facts, statistics and survey data to answer the

above mentioned questions. China is endeavoring to achieve four goals of modernizations: industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defense. Science holds the key to the modernizations, while education serves as the foundation. In other words, everybody agrees; but in practice, people often fail to assign education to its proper position.

Fundings Shortages

In China, public expenditure on education as a percentage of the total state budget was only 7.8 percent in 1980. Such a low percentage of expenditures on education is rarely seen among other countries. Of the countries in the world, China ranks 149th in terms of per capita educational spending. It accounted for 22.7 percent in Japan, 19.5 percent in the United States and 16.1 percent in developing countries in 1965. It should also be pointed out that in capitalist countries, budgetary spending only accounted for a part of the total expenditures on education. There are many private schools, missionary schools, and educational institutions set up with investment by capitalists, the expenditures of which are included in the state budget.

From 1981 to 1985, China spent an average 2.56 percent of its national income on education, as against 7.3 percent in the United States, 8.4 percent in the Soviet Union, 6.6 percent in Japan.

In 1987, the central government allocated 22.6 billion yuan (\$ 6.2 billion) for education, 9.33 percent of its total expenditure. Although this doubled the percentage since the late 1950s, the number of students in school quadrupled to 200 million. In 1988, the state had budgeted 25.4 billion yuan, 12.2 per cent more than 1987. But further analysis shows that this increase will be swallowed up by growing enrollment, pay rises

for college teachers and inflated price in the market. Very little, if any, will go to improving facilities and quality of education, particularly that in primary and secondary schools. Limited as they are, funds for education also have been misappropriated quite often by local officials, to build their offices or buy expensive cars, for example.

The especially low percentage of China's educational spending in total budget can only testify to one fact: for a long time China has failed to put educational undertakings, as an investment in intelligence development, in their proper place. The Chinese have to admit that our country owe a massive debt in terms of spending on education, especially on primary education. Because of the minimum of spending, schools are poorly equipped, primary and secondary school teachers are underpaid and have a low social status. A large portion of them are not up to the qualification standards.

Poor Working Condition

According to the following report in CHINA DAILY newspaper, "School want a new injection of cash", an extra 75 million square metres of classrooms are needed in primary and middle schools nation-wide and 45 million square metres of dilapidated school buildings are threatening the safety of teachers and students. Only 10 per cent of the nation's primary and middle schools have the necessary experimental teaching equipment stipulated by the State Education Commission. According to estimates, repairing all dangerous school buildings across the nation would use up total educational funds for ~~two~~ years. Take Beijing, the capital of our country, there are even obliged to set a quota for the use of chalk, not to say books, instruments, and other equipment in many schools. Now the

Low salary

Ministry of Education has set forth the minimum requirement for running schools: schools should have safe buildings, every class should have a classroom and every student should have a desk and chair. But even with such minimum requirements, many local primary schools have difficulty meeting them. According to the report in CHINA DAILY newspaper, "Aid to education hailed". Many counties complain about fund shortages for schools and then do little about it. Fugou County in Henan Province was an example. In the mid 1970s, the county in central China had 292 elementary schools, but most "classrooms were dark; desks were made of mud; school grounds were littered and pupils coming out of class were covered with dirt. according to the People's Daily Newspaper. In Changle County, Fujian Province in Southeastern China, many rural schools were located in run-down temples or shrines. " People called these schools five broken; broken building, broken windows, broken doors, broken desks and broken stools", the county government reported. One township school was forced to ask at least half of its 1923 students to bring two stools to the classrooms, a taller stool to serve as desk and a smaller one as seat.

In Xianghuang Qi Inner Mongolia, a pastoral area, many seven to eight year old children had to walk 20 or 30 Kilometers to school. During the "cultural Revolution" schools on horse back were founded, but these circuit riding teachers met students only once in every three to five days. Even so, those responsible teachers who did not idle their days away eating and drinking in the herdsmen's tents were able to teach only a little Mongolian, no other subjects.

benefits are much lower than the latter. It is far too common these days for a teacher to earn less than a vendor or a bartender.

In terms of actual purchasing power, a teacher makes 10 percent of what he or she would have made prior to the outbreak of the Anti-Japan War in the 1930s. Said by Qian Jiaju, Vice chairman of the China Democratic league, one the country's non-communist parties in his speech to the Chinese People's political Consultative conference and interview with China Daily newspaper later. The wide gap between their wages and those of manual workers has caused much concern over recent years. Under these circumstances, few of the young are willing to become teachers, a job which they describe as going down a "dark road" as compared with going in for business (golden road) or engaging in politics (red road).

Lower social status

In daily life, people say 'the price is going up, only the price of the teacher and garbage is going down" Even though the tuition, board and lodging are free for the students in normal colleges, less and less students would like to enter normal colleges.

During the period of cultural revolution, people with more knowledge were regarded as being "more reactionary" and "more stupid". Intellectuals had to be reeducated by workers and peasants. Teachers were designated in the worst category, they bore the brunt of the class struggles of the past that singled out educated people as targets. In Daishan County, Zheziang Province of 142 cases filed before 1977 and later judged to be based on false charges, 126 involved teachers. Such biases, as well as the poor living and working conditions, led many

teachers to leave the rural areas and small towns, making the shortage of teachers even worse.

Teacher Resignations

Resignations by primary and middle school teachers have become a major threat to China's educational development, said Wang Ye zhu, a state education commission official, in an interview with the China daily. According to a study of 11 districts and counties in six provinces, including Guangdong Henan, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, 5091 primary and middle school teachers have resigned since 1986, 87.9% from country or township schools.

According to the Fujian Daily May 17, 1987, because of the low salary, poor living and working condition, in Ningde district in Fujian Province, 148 schools were forced to suspend classes because 835 teachers left, thus depriving 2874 students of education. Most of the graduates of the 1950s and 1960s from Beijing and Shanghai who contributed so much to education there are gone. Most of the current teaching staff is made up of recent graduates with little practical experience. To encourage more students to become teachers, many normal colleges and universities have lowered the minimum admission scores and signed contracts with freshmen guaranteeing them specific job and district assignment after graduation. But less than one year after earning their diplomas, many still want to transfer to other jobs. Wang said that most of the teachers leaving are core of the professional staff, highly educated young and middle aged teachers. Most of those who leave find jobs in business administrative units, or enterprises where the availability of higher paying job encourage poorly paid teachers to change professions.

China Daily reported, because of lower wages, 300000 primary and middle school teachers have left their posts in recent times, and 3.6 million teachers working at school run by local collectives are living in very poor conditions. Problems with housing and medical care also prompt teachers to switch jobs. In some rural areas, a teacher's health allowance amounts to 2.5 to 3 yuan a month. Many teachers with debilitating illnesses have run up medical debts of thousands of yuan. Conditions are even harder for those in school run by rural communities. Not only are the wages low, but teachers receive no bonuses, no free medical care or other living subsidies. In some areas, it is impossible to maintain normal living standards. After a day of hard work, many of them have to moonlight to make ends meet. Premature aging, illness and early death are common among them. Average age of death is 58 among professionals (exclusive of teachers in primary and middle school) and 68 in the whole population.

Qualifications

Because of the lower salary, lower social status, only a few good students would like to be teachers. Normal colleges have to lower the minimum admission scores. On the other hand, many good teachers can find a higher paying job in business or government department so that the general academic level among school teachers is rather low. For example, in 1986, there are 146,000 primary teachers in Zhe Jiang Province, only 52.5% (about 76,770) have high school diploma. There are 87500 secondary school teachers, only 15% (about 13000) have a bachelor degree. According to a sample survey made by the Chinese Education Commission, the rate of qualified teachers in Zhe Jiang Province is the

highest one in China. So people are not surprise, when they find out that the teachers in primary schools only have a diploma from primary school; teachers in the secondary schools only have a diploma from high school; teachers in the universities only have a bachelors degree. Some 70% of the teachers are unqualified for their jobs. The State Compulsory Education Law stipulates that a child is to receive nine years of education, yet only 60% of the children attending primary schools can finish their six-year course. So 200 to 300 million illiterates are scattered China. (Workers' Daily)

According "survey data on intellectuals" in Chinese Education. One study provides revealing data demonstrating how secondary schools are disadvantaged when graduates from teachers' universities are assigned employment. The first rate student were either kept by the teachers' university itself, assigned to other institutions of higher learning, or sent to government offices; the second rate students were assigned to secondary technical schools or key secondary schools; and the third-rate students were assigned to average secondary schools.

Most counties with large populations are played by lack of qualified teachers. This is proving to be a major stumbling block in the country's effort to achieve nine-year compulsory education by the end of this century.

The above is the macroscopic picture of teachers' situation in China.

With the purpose of presenting a basic and microscopic picture of the teachers' needs and troubles, the educational administrative department selected a county with group-samples from different levels as the selection of teachers to be surveyed. The total number of teachers surveyed came to 229 --- 67 females and 162 males. (Refer to Table 1 in Appendix)

According to the survey findings, the situation with brief explanations in two sections as follows:

Teachers' Troubles

Table 1 lists fifteen questions, these questions can be classified into four sections: 3,7,9,10,14,15 reflects teachers' criticism of the school administration or of some current systems and policies that they believe are not right. They demand reasonable compensation and fair treatment. 1,4,6,11 tells of teachers' complaints about their hard work. 5,12,13 expresses the teachers' desire for an improvement in their learning and condition for further training. 2,8 shows teachers' desire for more concern and higher pay and a solution to the difficulties in their life.

The above gives us a basic picture of what troubles the teachers at present. It also shows the teachers' psychology: they want to be understood, respected and cared for, especially to be treated fairly and they have a strong desire for democracy and knowledge. The unreasonable systems, the unfair leadership, the practice of favoritism, and the reign of prejudice are the major things troubling the teachers and affecting the psychological equilibrium in a school. They are poisonous germs that destroy unity and poison the normal psychological atmosphere in school.

Teacher's Needs

The troubles of teachers are essentially the outcome of the failure to satisfy their needs. In the questionnaire, thirteen questions are listed. The teachers are required to choose from these questions two they regarded as the most important. The statistics are given in table 2.

It is true that there has been a certain improvement in teachers' compensation, but there is still a great disparity between the teaching profession and other trades. An old teacher wrote on the questionnaire the following quatrain: "Though scholars have always hold themselves to blame, I cannot but feel uncomfortable when my days are on the wane; My forty years service is rewarded with sixty yuan (\$15) a month. My expectation of the policy's good results has been in vain."

Other teachers said: "The current catchword is 'He who becomes rich is honored but teachers will never be entitled to that honor.'" (Chinese Education)

It is an encouraging sign that so many teachers are enthusiastic about the improvement of their own learning. The ten-point turmoil of the "Cultural Revolution" seriously undermined our educational undertakings. As a result, quite a few young and middle-aged teachers have yet to attain the level of college or junior college graduates. Some old teachers are troubled with the aging of their knowledge and need to take refresher courses.

There is a special question related to item 6, transfer to other job. Question is: "Are you contented with teaching? Why or why not?"

Of all respondents, those answered this negatively amount to 41%. Data classified into different age group. Age 40 is a dividing line. Of the 151 respondents at or under age 40, 73 (48%) are discontented. Of the 78 respondents over age 40, 15 (19.2%) are discontented.

Classified by sex, the data show that, of the 162 male, 75 (46.3%) are discontented; of the 67 females 19 (28.4%) are discontented. Statistics shows that almost half of the respondents expressed their discontent with teaching, younger teachers are more discontented than older teachers (with ago 40 as a dividing line) and male teachers are more

discontented than female teachers.

The answers to "why not" show two causes of the teachers' discontent: first, the low social status of teachers, their low pay and their extraordinarily demanding job. All this accounts for their discontent. Quite a few teachers say: "I really love this noble, soul-shaping profession. However, I cannot rest contented because of the miserable pay and low social status" This sentiment finds even stronger expression among young teachers, especially those newly graduated from college.

Second, mismanagement of the school, State finances are tight; therefore, teachers' working and living conditions can only improved gradually. This is understood by the great majority of teachers. They do not want to put excessive demands on the state.

Many teachers indicate that in some schools the leading cadres are ignorant about the teaching profession but are high-handed and like to coerce the teachers into submission. They make no effort toward solving the problems in the teachers work and life. Instead, they demand of the teachers only good teaching quality and high promotion rates. This wears out the teachers and causes them to become discontented. As a result, they reluctantly decide to leave. In schools where cadres and the masses maintain a fairly harmonious relationship and the teachers feel an ease of mind, there are may fewer discontented teachers, and their problems are much less acute.

The above data and analysis offer a spectrum of the various and complicated trouble playing teachers in China. To relieve teachers of their troubles and to satisfy their needs. We must find out the main problems and proceed to solve them in the following respects.

1) Government should give more funds and support to education:

The government has expressed concern over education all right, but its promises have not been followed by corresponding actions. Qian Jiaju, vice -chairman of the China Democratic League, one the country's non-communist parties said: "If we still fail to place education as the basic construction of the country, our descendants will pay dearly for it in the next century. In difference to education will provoke disastrous consequences much more serious than that of over-population." he said.

Although some people applaud the government new policy of encouraging schools to make up for the shortage of state investments by earning additional income from paid social services, there are people against the notion. They argued that this might result in the diversion of the already insufficient intellectual resources, further endangering the quality of education.

They suggested that the state levy more tares on sales of cigarettes, liquor and other products for education; issue education bonds; permit the establishment of privately funded schools; and attract foreign investments to set up schools.

2) Take effective measures to the elevate teachers' social status and improve their working and living condition.

The Third Plenary Session of the Twelfth Chinese Communist Party Central Committee stressed the necessity to respect knowledge and people of talent. The CCITT Central Committee Resolution on the reform of the Economic System points out: "It is particularly urgent to change the practice of paying low compensation for mental labor" We must make great efforts to improve teachers' working and living conditions, raise their salaries, and make teaching profession, especially in primary and secondary schools, the most respected and admired in society.

3) Improve school administration and raise the leadership's working

efficiency.

To relieve teachers of their troubles, we must first improve the school administrative and pay attention to doing a good job in the following aspects.

First, a school must choose a good leader --- the principle. The principle of a school must be the best and most influential member the collective of teachers. He or she must have the ability to lead the school's educational and teaching work, the ability to handle various relations and the ability to manage comprehensively the entire administration.

Second, school leaders are required to study conscientiously and master theory of modern education, psychology, and pedagogy, particularly and knowledge of school administration and administrative psychology.

Third, a principal should share the financial burden borne by the state. Coupling this with political and ideological work, he should make every effort to help resolve the teachers' financial problems and increase their earnings and benefits. For instance, the money made by the school factory can be used for bonuses and allowances for teachers.

Fourth, the leadership must make efforts to replenish the library and teachers' reference material rooms and create conditions for the further training of and study by the teachers so as to satisfy their desire for knowledge.

Fifth, the leadership must respect and trust the teachers, show concern for them, care for their advanced studies, and help solve their problems. The leadership should combine the duty of satisfying the teachers' rightful needs with the goal of running the school well, and take the process of solving the teachers' problems as a process of helping teachers to perfect themselves and build up their devotion to the noble

cause and their strong sense of responsibility.

Conclusion

Teaching is not considered a desirable occupation in China. Many teachers are unhappy in their jobs. Education is weak sector within the bureaucracy. Because education had been neglected for a long time, especially during the Cultural Revolution, many people, including country officials, did not take the problems seriously. The poor living and working condition, led many teachers to leave the rural areas and small towns making the shortage of teachers even worse. Teachers generally have not been well-paid in China. The average wage has been the lowest among government employee. So even though tuition and food are free in normal universities, less and less students would like to go.

As the main force of school, teachers undertake the lofty task of all-round training. The quality of teachers has a direct bearing on the development of the new generation being educated in schools, and a prospective bearing on the future of the nation. Therefore, building a contingent of qualified teacher is a major measure of fundamental importance for the improvement of educational qualities and the development of the cause of education.

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Table 1

Percentage of Teachers in Different Types of Schools Who Have Troubles in 15 Major Items

Item of trouble	Eight-grade rural schools	Junior high schools	Senior high schools	12-grade factory-affiliated schools	Average percentage
1. To say "teachers are hard working" is only lip service	51.8	42.9	64.7	84.4	58.3
2. In a tight squeeze because of low income	58.8	41.3	45.8	45.5	53.7
3. Same work, different pay	38.8	22.2	45.8	51.5	38
4. Busy, tense, and dull work	34.1	31.7	39.6	45.5	36.2
5. No access to more advanced training	25.9	41.3	33.3	51.5	35.4
6. Teachers don't even have time to teach their own children	32.9	17.5	31.3	48.5	30.1
7. No diploma, no pay hike, despite hard work	25.9	20.8	31.3	51.5	29.3
8. Unable to take care of folks at home in the country	37.6	25.4	29.2	15.2	29.3
9. Diploma is valuable, learning is of no use	28.2	20.8	35.4	36.4	28.8
10. One is supposed to work hard but not to claim achievements	22.4	23.8	29.2	48.5	27.9
11. Pupils are difficult to handle, and you get blamed for your effort	31.8	17.5	27.1	36.4	27.5
12. Lack of access to books and journals	21.2	31.7	39.6	15.2	27.1
13. Too busy to have time for study	18.8	15.9	20.8	66.7	25.4
14. More work for the more capable; more work, more mistakes	24.7	20.6	20.8	33.3	24.7
15. Leaders are unfair, practicing favoritism	5.9	19	37.5	48.5	23.6
Average percentage	30.9	27	35.7	45.3	32.9

Table 2

Teachers' Choice of Needs

Type of need	Number of teachers concerned	Percentage
Pay raise	118	51.5
Opportunity for more training	55	24
Train qualified students for the country	49	21.4
Become qualified educator	46	20.1
Win respect and trust	41	17.9
Transfer to other jobs	28	12.2
Keep fit	23	10
Hope their children can find employment or be admitted into college	22	9.6
Proper job title be conferred	20	8.7
Transfer to another school for a better environment	18	7.9
Join the party	17	7.4
Become an outstanding teacher	11	4.8
Obtain a college or a junior college diploma	10	4.4
Total	458	200